

SOCIAL EQUITY IN URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

Social equity in urban infrastructure planning is important, especially where the infrastructure investment is high, and charging systems are applied, this will lead some people could not afford a fair delivery of services. The role of the planners is important to secure infrastructure delivery for the poor within the adopted and applied planning system in a respective country to anticipate the trend of privatization in production and delivery of infrastructure and services.

I. BACKGROUND

The planning and management of public infrastructure holds important questions for social equity. Public decision concerning such infrastructure often affect people's live in fundamental ways, both in terms of how such investments are financed and how they are located in the physical and social environment.¹

The rapid growth of population, especially in developing countries need an effective response. Davey argued that "Effective response" means that population growth is matched by access to basic infrastructure, shelter and employment, and does not result in substantial deterioration in standards of living or environmental quality. While such access will depend as much, if not more, on private initiatives and enterprise, these are critically affected by public sector policies and functions which only government can perform.²

The focus of the paper is to strengthen the importance of social equity in infrastructure development. The reason is that infrastructure investment needs huge considerable cost, while most of developing countries are in lack of finance to improve the level of infrastructure services. The same condition is also prevailed in developed countries, where not all local governments are financially strong. One solution is to privatize the infrastructure provision and production or

creating the public-private partnership in production and delivering the service.

Question should be raised whether the privatization can secure the social equity in infrastructure provision, especially in developing countries. I argue that the role of planners is very important to raise the concern of the poor, who usually left behind in infrastructure delivery. The choice of the planning system adopted in a country also an important issue. A comprehensive planning system that mostly adopted and applied in most all countries, who produce a utilitarian procedural planning, should accommodate the advocacy planning who raise the possibility of the poor in deciding their own proper needs of infrastructure. The economic system of a country is also an important factor. Most countries in the 1980s had been doing the structural adjustment, in terms of the deregulation to accommodate the private sector to participate in urban service production and delivery.

II. SOCIAL EQUITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

Planners must address issues that will effect the betterment of communities. Blakely (et al, 2000) argued that to ensure equitable results and influence the allocation of resources, comprehensive planning must take on a new approach. Rather than separating the analysis of economic, environmental and fiscal impacts, all planning activities

should consider their social implications so that all parts reinforce the planning goals. Moreover he argued that the achievement of social equity in planning leads to the expansion of opportunities and the creation of more choices not only for those in need, but for the broader community as well.³

Citing Krumholz and Forester (1990, in Blakely et al, 2000), 'equity planning' is *"as significantly, we use 'equity planning' here as a shorthand to refer to planning efforts that pay particular attention to the needs of poor and vulnerable populations, populations also likely to suffer the burdens of racial and sexual discrimination, both institutional and personal."*

Using Young argumentation, equity issues are even more difficult. 'The arguments against existence (of equity) take three different forms. The first is that equity is merely a word that hypocritical people use to cloak self-interest—it has *no intrinsic meaning* so therefore fails to exist. The second—is that even if equity does exist in some notional sense, it is so hopelessly subjective that it cannot be analyzed scientifically—it fails to exist in an *objective* sense. The third argument that there is no sensible theory about it—thus it fails to exist in an *academic sense*.' (Young, 1994, Preface).⁴

Syme (et al, 1999) in his researched differentiated between equity, procedural justice, and distributive justice. Syme (et al, 1999) explained that equity seemed to have the largest and longest history of published research. Authors such as Rasinski (1987), had shown in the context of social welfare policy that equity had two components, 'proportionality' and 'egalitarianism'. The first dimension of equity inferred that people should be distributed funds according to their effort or 'deservedness'. Egalitarianism suggested that everyone should be treated equally. It was imagined that people would use both dimensions, perhaps with differing emphasis.⁵

Procedural justice research concentrates on the characteristics of a decision-making

process which make it seem just to people vulnerable to the consequences of the decision. Generalizable dimensions of procedural justice such as 'voice' or the feeling that one has had the opportunity to influence the process have been demonstrated and replicated. The major hypothesis of procedural justice is that if procedural justice is demonstrated in a decision-making process the outcome is more likely to be accepted.⁶

Distributive justice as a concept related to the evaluation of whether an outcome was just in terms of the distribution of a resource between stakeholders. In this way equity and distributive justice are closely related concepts. The dimensions of equity seem to be the bases on which individuals assess whether or not distributive justice has been achieved.⁷

Beatly argued that social equity in planning is used to explain public decision concerning of how such investments are financed and how they are located in the physical and social environment (Beatly, 1988: 208). Moreover he pointed out that equity in infrastructure planning can be addressed by asking, debating and explicitly answering several fundamental questions. These include the following: (1) What ethical concepts or principles are relevant in determining an equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of public infrastructure? (2) How should the relevant public or moral community be defined? And (3) How and by whom should decisions about public infrastructure be made?⁸

Lucy (1988:227) pointed out: *"...five interpretations of the concept that often have been applied. These are the beliefs that equity, under various circumstances, should be based on equality, need, demand, preference, or willingness-to-pay, or some combination of these concepts"*. Another important theory to support the discussion about the concept of social equity in planning is the Theory of Justice (Rawls, 1971).

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that there is awareness that social equity in

planning should be considered carefully, in terms of distribution of benefit and burdens of public infrastructure, and also in terms of public decision making.

III. INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

Infrastructure and public facilities are essential element that is vital to a city. Porter (1986: 47) emphasizes that infrastructure is an essential factor for any development because without it, development will not occur.⁹ Feldman *et al.* (1988:1) point out that "A healthy and vibrant infrastructure is essential to the continued prosperity of any nation."¹⁰ World Bank (1994:2) argues that Infrastructure can deliver major benefits in economic growth, poverty alleviation, and environmental sustainability – but only when it provides services that respond to effective demand and does so efficiently.

Infrastructure is an umbrella term for many activities referred to as "social overhead capital" by such development economists as Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, Ragnar Nurkse, and Albert Hirschman (World Bank, 1994:2).¹¹ World Bank (1994:2) focuses infrastructure on economic infrastructure and include services from public utilities (power, telecommunications, piped water supply, sanitation and sewerage, solid waste collection and disposal, piped gas); public works (roads and major dam and canal works for irrigation and drainage); other transport sectors (urban and intraurban railways, urban transport, ports and waterways, and airports).

Some infrastructure sectors can directly links to poverty, such as clean water, sanitation, and transport. To a great extent, the poor can be identified as those who are unable to consume a basic quantity of clean water and who are subject to unsanitary surroundings, with extremely limited mobility or communications beyond their immediate settlement (see World Bank, 1994:20).

The poor typically use fewer infrastructure services than the nonpoor, but not only because of low incomes – they also have very low access.¹² Many countries have intro-

duced subsidies through low tariffs with the aim of improving the poor's access to infrastructure services, but most of these subsidies have been captured by middle-and high-income households.¹³ Failure to reach the poor has often been associated with flawed infrastructure pricing policies, too little emphasis has been placed on providing the poor with suitable options for the kind of services of most value them (and for which they are willingness to pay).¹⁴

Providing infrastructure is a long process which includes financing, design, implementation and maintenance. The public sector (including all levels of government), private sector (developers, landowners, agencies) and users (residents) are involved in infrastructure provision (see Azizi, 1995: 508). Financing urban infrastructure is an issue of increasing importance. Financing has traditionally been the most important aspect on which much of the literature is focused (see Azizi, 1995: 509). Azizi (1995: 509) explained some new methods to financing infrastructure: impact fees, revolving loan funds, Land Pooling Readjustment Technique, borrowing the federal, contracting-out and linkage fees.

The lack of finance to support infrastructure development in developing countries became the motivation to deregulate the infrastructure sector (and structural adjustment). Infrastructure provision is seen as the responsibility of the urban government, though this was now changed as the private participation is increasing. Rondinelli (in Davey 1993: 3) defines the tasks of urban government as: (1) providing infrastructure essential to the efficient operation of cities; (2) providing services that develop human resources, improve productivity and raise the standard of living of urban residents; (3) regulating private activities that affect community welfare and the health and safety of the urban population; and (4) providing services and facilities that support productive activities and allow private enterprise to operate efficiently in urban areas.

Davey (1993) defined that services may be provided by (1) the public sector; (with or

without contracting out production to private organizations); (2) the public and private sectors in partnership; (3) the private sector under public supervision through franchised monopolies or regulated competition; or (3) the private sector (including self help) without public intervention.¹⁵

While, Azizi (1995:509) summarized from the literature, argued that financial measures can be categorized in three ways including: traditional public expenditure; private-sector participation (developer's contributions or direct investment by developers); and direct user payments.

IV. THE ROLE OF PLANNERS

Paul Davidoff, who is honored by planners for his devotion to equity in planning, viewed the profession as a means of addressing a wide range of societal problems (Deakin, 2000). He saw planning as a way to improve physical and economic conditions for all people, including those with fewest resources at their command. The challenge for planning professionals, following this line of thinking, is to find ways to promote participatory democracy and positive social change. (See also Checkoway, 1994:139).¹⁶ He especially challenged planners to promote participatory democracy and positive social change.

Davidoff (1996:307) said that if the planning process is to encourage democratic urban government, then it must operate so as to include rather than exclude citizens from participating in the process. "Inclusion" means not only permitting citizens to be heard. It also means allowing them to become well informed about the underlying reasons for planning proposals, and to respond to these in the technical language of professional planners.

Moreover Davidoff (1996: 307-308) pointed out that a practice that has discouraged full participation by citizens in plan making in the past has been based on what might be called the "unitary plan". This is the idea that only one agency in a community should prepare a comprehensive plan; that agency is the city planning commission

or department. He added (1996:309), "where plural planning is practiced, advocacy becomes the means of professional support for competing claims about how the community should develop. Pluralism in support of political contention describes the process; advocacy describes the role performed by the professional in the process."

Debate about the dynamics of service provision has often appeared to revolve around the strength of developers to resist public authority demands to meet 'costs', and/or the power of planners to extract benefits to mitigate the 'impact' of development on local communities.¹⁷

Planners shared in this task by managing a rational and comprehensive system of land-use planning which provided substantial certainty for developers. But the planning system did not have a major role in the provision of infrastructure services and there was thus relatively little consideration of the role of infrastructure provision in development processes (Healey, 1991, 1992).¹⁸

Infrastructure planners are looking not only at the specific impacts of particular projects, but at the choice of instruments for finance in evaluating equity. Increasingly, infrastructure planners are also stepping back from the specifics of projects to examine whether different alternatives – recycling a larger portion of the waste stream, for example – might produce more balanced, and fairer, results.¹⁹

V. DISCUSSION

The challenge is how to increase the infrastructure performance, while there is difficulty in urban infrastructure financing. Alternative to give to private sector participation as mention earlier, can be one alternative solution, but this also has limitation. As Mattingly argued (1995:4), private sector has command of the largest pool of resources by far in the developing countries with capitalist economist. But, he saw the limitation of the private sector that the sector will provide only those services

which yield competitive profits and will provide those services only at a levels of quality and quantity which maintain such profits (see Mattingly, 1995: pp3-4).

A challenge raised by Davidoff, should be considered as another alternative in securing the poor, especially in the context of creating social equity in planning. The role of advocacy planning can be one solution.

Mattingly argued (1995:5) that government at all levels have tended to view the private and community sectors as having little or no role in the running of urban areas. Considering that infrastructure provision as part of public sector in managing the urban infrastructure, Mattingly (1995:3) strengthened that the public sector does not have a unified overall view of urban management objectives, even though its constituents are linked in a common structure of government.

To secure the social equity in planning, practicing advocacy planning is important. The community sector can perform significant tasks in urban infrastructure provision. Mattingly (1995:4) argued, that the community sector – also called the third or non-profit sector – through a variety of voluntary and cooperative organizations, including community based organizations, services are provided, facilities are constructed and maintained, and even some planning is performed.

Organizations in community sector can aim to serve the public in general or a particular group. They fill gaps in the services of government, providing quality and quantity which are lacking, as well as pursue objectives not taken up by government (see also Mattingly, 1995:4).

Privatization has been presented as a means to rationalize subsidies, specifically reducing benefits to wealthier families, and thereby freeing resources for lower-income families or disadvantaged groups. Grange (1998: 507) criticized privatization that the reality of privatization has often been to redistribute resources from lower social

groups to higher social groups. In many instances privatization has actually increased inequities in the distribution of social resources, and this has been a major area of concern for governments, policy analysts and service providers alike (see also Kamerman and Kahn, 1989; Papadakis and Taylor-Gooby, 1987).

One of the rationales for privatizing social services has been to improve the equitable distribution of public resources. However, the impact of privatization on equity has been uneven. As explained by Grange (1998: 509) using a case of privatizing public housing in Hong Kong, there are three processes that provide indications of the impact of privatization on equity, namely: changes in the intersectoral distribution of subsidies; changes in the quantity and quality of public rental stock relative to demand; and changes in access to public rental housing.

Finally, it is interesting to mention Boisvert and Senaouci (2000: 1132). He argued that the main causes of infrastructural deficiencies are not technical or even economic (meaning willingness to pay), but are primarily managerial or more properly of a socio-political nature. This includes such issues as co-ordination among several levels of public administration, the composition of administration boards, the historical weight of user-pay structures and accessibility conditions to municipal financing and international aid.

Last but not least see the critic of David Harvey (1973) about physical planning. In a Marxist tradition, he argued that physical planning through its failure to understand the mechanisms of distribution of both public and private goods in the urban system, has led not only the perpetuation of inequality but in many cases to the enhancement of inequality.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to elaborate social equity in urban infrastructure planning. I argued that the planning and

management of public infrastructure holds important questions for social equity.

Social equity in urban infrastructure planning is needed. Problems that prevailed are on the field of infrastructure financing, though this reason is not supported by Boisvert and Senaouci (2000).

Privatization, as one alternative to enhance infrastructure provision, is still being questioned to be able to create social equity in planning. It is still important to consider the advocacy planning approach, because public decision concerning such infrastructure often affect people's live in fundamental ways, both in terms of how such investments are financed and how they are located in the physical and social environment (see Beatly, 1988:208).

If the technical and economic reasons are not the reason of infrastructure deficiencies, then there is still hope for securing social equity in planning especially for the poor. But, I also argued that advocacy planning is one alternative to improve social equity in planning.

Finally, critic as raised by Harvey (1973) about physical planning, should be considered as one important input in enhancing social equity in planning. Then, it is the task for planners, especially infrastructure planners, to create social equity in urban infrastructure planning.

VII. REFERENCE

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